

THE
RECONCILER.

AN EPISTLE
PACIFICATORIE
of the seeming-differences of
opinion concerning the true-
ness and visibility of the Ro-
man Church.

By Ios: EXON.



LONDON,
Printed by M. F. for Nath: Butter.
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TO
THE RIGHT HO-
NOVRABLE, AND
truly religious, my singular
good Lord, *Edward Earle*
of Norwich.

My ever honored Lord:



Confesse my
charity led me
into an error;
Your Lord-
shippe well
knows how
apt I am to be
overtaken with these better de-
ceits of an over kinde credulity. I
had

had thought that any dash of my
 pen, in a sudden, and easie adver-
 tisement, might have served to
 have quitted that ignorant scan-
 dall, which was cast upon my
 mis-taken assertion, of the true vi-
 sibility of the Romane Church.
 The issue proves all otherwise:
 I finde, to my grieve, that the mis-
 understanding tenacitic of some
 zealous spirits hath made it a
 quarrell. It cannot but trouble
 me to see that the position, which
 is so familiarly current with the
 best reformed Divines; & which
 hath beene so oft and long since
 published by mee without con-
 tradiction; yea, not without the
 approbation and applause of the
 whole representative body of the
 Clergie of this kingdome, should
 now

now be quarrelled, and drawne
into the detestation of those that
know it not; As one therefore
that should thinke it corosive
enough, that any occasion should
be taken by ought of mine, to ra-
vell but one thred of that seamless
coat, I doe earnestly desire, by a
more full explication, to give
cleare satisfaction to all Readers;
and by this seasonable reconcile-
ment, to stop the flood-gates of
contention; I know it will not be
unpleasing to your Lordship, that
through your honorable and pi-
ous hands, these welcome papers
should be transmitted to many;
Wherein I shall first beseech, yea
adjure al Christians, under whose
eyes they shall fall, by the dreadfull
name of that G O D, who shall
judge

judge both the quicke, and the dead, to lay aside all unjust prejudices; and to allow the words of Truth, and Peace; I dare confidently say, Let us be understood, and we are agreed.

The searcher of all harts knows how far it was from my thoughts to speake ought in favour of the Roman Synagogue: If I have not sufficiently branded that Strūpet, I justly suffer. *Luthers* broad word is by me already both safely cōstrued, & sufficiently vindicated. But, doe you not say, It is a true visible Church? Do you not yeeld some kinde of communion with these clients of Antichrist? What is, if this be not, favour? Marke well, Christian Reader, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things:

Ob.

things : To beginne with the latter; No man can say but the Church of Rome holds some Truths; those truths are Gods, and in his right, ours; why should not wee challenge our owne, wheresoever we finde it? If a verie Devill shall say of Christ, *Thou art the Sonne of the living God*, wee will snatch this truth out of his mouth, as usurped; and in spight of him, proclaime it for our own. Indeed, there is no communion betwixt light and darknesse; but there is communion betwixt light and light; Now all truth is light, and therefore symbolizeth with it selfe. With that light, therefore, whose glimmering yet remaines in their darknesse, our clearer light will, and must hold

Resp.

com-

communion ; If they professe
 three Persons in one Godhead ;
 two natures in one person of
 Christ ; shall we detrect to joine
 with them in this Christian veri-
 tie? We abhorre to have any com-
 munion with them in their er-
 rors, in their idolatrous or super-
 stitious practices, these are their
 owne, not ours. If we durst have
 taken their part in these, this breach
 had not beene ; Now, who can
 but say that we must hate their e-
 vill, and allow their good? It is no
 countenance to their errours that
 wee embrace our owne truths ;
 It is no disparagement to our
 truths, that they have blended
 them with their errors: Here can
 be no difference, then, if this com-
 munion bee not mis-taken, no
 man

man will say that wee may sever
from their common truths; No
man will say that wee may joyne
with them in their hatefull er-
rours.

For the former; Hee that saith
a theefe is truly a man, doth hee
therein favour that theefe? He that
saith, a diseased, dropfied, dying
bodie, is a true (though corrupt)
body, doth he favour that disease,
or that living carcasle? It is no o-
ther, no more that I say of the
Church of Rome: Truenesse of
being, and outward visibilty, are
no praise to her; Yea, these are ag-
gravations to her falshood: The
advantage that is both sought and
found in this assertion, is onely
ours, as we shall see in the sequell,
without any danger of their gain.

I say, then, that she is a true church,
 but, I say withall, shee is a false
 Church: True in existence, but
 false in beleefe: Let not the ho-
 monymie of a word breed jarres,
 where the sense is accorded: If
 we doe not yeeld her the true be-
 ing of a Church, why do we call
 her the Church of Rome? What
 speake we of? or where is the sub-
 ject of our question? who sees
 not that there is a morall trueness,
 and a naturall? He that is moral-
 ly the falsest man, is, in nature, as
 truly a man, as the honestest; and
 therefore in this regard as true a
 man: In the same sense therefore
 that wee say the Devill is a true
 (though false) spirit; that a cheater
 is a true (thogh false) man, we may
 and must say, that the Church of
 Rome

Rome is a true (though false) Church ; Certainly, there hath beene a true errour, and mistaking of the sense that is guiltie of this quarrell. As for the visibility, there can be no question : Would God, that Church did not too much fill our eie, yea the world ; There is nothing wherein it doth more pride it selfe, than in a glorious conspiciuitie, scorning, in this regard, the obscure paucitie of their opposers.

But you say, What is this but to play with ambiguities ; That the Church of Rome is it selfe, that is, a Church ; that it is visible ; that it is truly existent, there can be no doubt ; but is it still a part of the truly existent, visible church of Christ ? Surely, no otherwise than

Ob.

Resp.

than an hereticall and Apostaticall
 Church is, and may be: Reader,
 whosoever thou art, for Gods
 sake, for thy soules sake, marke
 where thou treadest; Else thou
 shalt bee sure to fall either into an
 open gulfe of uncharitablenesse,
 or into a dangerous precipice of
 errour. There is no feare, nor fa-
 vour to say, that the Church of
 Rome, under a Christian face,
 hath an Antichristian heart; over-
 turning that foundation by neces-
 sarie inferences, which by open
 profession it avoweth: That face,
 that profession, those avowed
 principles are enough to give it
 claime to a true outward visibili-
 tie of a Christian Church; whiles
 those damnable inferences are e-
 nough to scoffe it in the true style
 of

of heresie, and Antichristianisme;
 Now, this heresie, this Antichristianisme makes Rome justly odious, and execrable to God, to Angels, and Men; but cannot utterly dischutch it, whilest those main principles maintaine a weake life in that crazie, and corrupted bodie.

But is not this language different from that whereto our eares and eies have beene inured, from the mouthes, and pens of some reverend Divines and professors of our Church? Know, Reader, that the streame of, the famous Doctors, both at home, and abroad, hath runne strongly my way: I should have feared, and hated to goe alone; what reason is there then to single out one man
 B in

in a throng? Some few worthie Authors have spoken otherwise, in the warmth of their zealous contention; yet so, as that even to them **durst** I appeale for my Iudges; for if their sound differ from me, their sense agrees with mee: that, which as I touched in my Advertisement, so I am now ready to make cleare by the instance of learned *Zanchius*; whose pregnant testimonies compared together, shall plainly teach us, how easie a reconciliation may be made betwixt these two, seemingly contrarie, opinions: That wor-thie Author, in his profession of Christian Religion, which he wrote, and published, in the 70. yeare of his age, having defined the Church of Christ in generall,

and

and passed thorow the properties of it, at last, descending to the subdivision of the Church militant, comes to inquire, how particular Churches may be knowne to be the true churches of Christ; whereof he determines thus. *Illas igitur, &c.* Those Churches therefore doe wee acknowledge for the true Churches of Christ, in which first of all, the pure doctrine of the Gospell is preached, heard, admitted; and so onely admitted, that there is neither place, nor eare given to the contrarie: For both these are the just propertie of the flocke or sheepe of Christ; namely, both to heare the voice of their owne Pastor, and to reject the voice of strangers. *Iohn 10. 4.* In which, secondly, the Sacraments

instituted by Christ, are lawfully, and (as much as may bee) according to Christs institution, admitted, and received; and therefore, in which the Sacraments devised by men are not admitted, and allowed; In which lastly, the discipline of Christ hath the due place; that is, where both publicly, and privately, charitable care is had, both by admonitions, corrections, and at last (if need be) by excommunications, that the Commandements of God be duly kept, and that all persons live soberly, justly, and piously, to the glorie of God, and edification of their Neighbour. Thus hee; wherein, who sees not how directly he aimes, both at the justifying of our Churches, and the

casheering of the Roman, which
 is palpably guiltie of the violation
 of these wholesome rules? and in-
 deed, it must needs be said, if we
 bring the Roman Church to this
 touch, she is cast for a meer coun-
 terfeit; shee is as farre from truth,
 as truth is from falshood: Now
 by this time you goe away with
 an opinion that learned *Zanchie*
 is my professed adversarie, and
 hath directly condemned my po-
 sition, of the truenesse, and visibi-
 litie of the Roman Church: Have
 but patience, I beseech you, to read
 what the same excellent Author
 writes, in his golden Preface to
 that noble worke, *De natura Dei*;
 where this question is clearly, and
 punctually decided: There you
 shall finde, that having passed

through the wofull and gloomie
 offuscations of the Church of
 God, in all former ages, he, descen-
 ding to the darknesse of the pre-
 sent Babylon, concludes thus :
Deinde non potuit Satan, &c. More-
 over, Satan could not, in the verie
 Roman Church, doe what he li-
 sted, as hee had done in the Ea-
 sterne; to bring all things to such
 passe, as that it should no more
 have the forme of a Christian
 Church; For, in spight of Satan,
 that Church retained still the chief
 foundations of the faith, although
 weakned with the doctrines of
 men; it retained the publique prea-
 ching of the word of God, thogh
 in many places mis-understood,
 and mis-contrued; the invocati-
 on of the name of Christ, though
 joyned

joyned also with the invocation
of dead men; the administration
of Baptisme, instituted by Christ
himselfe, howsoever defiled with
the addition of many superstiti-
ons. So as, together with the sym-
bole of the covenant, the Cove-
nant it selfe remained still in her;
I mean in all the Churches of the
West, no otherwise than it did in
the Church of Israel, even after
that all things were in part profa-
ned by *Ieroboam*, and other impi-
ous, and idolatrous Kings, upon
the defection made by them from
the Church, and Tribe of *Juda*;
For, neither doe I assent to them
which would have the Church
of Rome to have no lesse ceased
to be the Church of Christ, than
those Easterne Churches, which

aftervards turned Mahumetan;
 what Church was eyer more
 corrupt than the Church of the
 ten Tribes, yet we learne from the
 Scriptures, that it was still the
 Church of God? And how doth
 Saint Paul call that Church, wher
 in Antichrist (hee saith) shall sit,
 the Temple of God? neither is it
 any Baptisme at all, that is admini-
 stred out of the Church of Christ.
 The wife that is an Adulteresse,
 doth not cease to be a wife, unless
 being despoiled of her marriage
 ring, she be manifestly divorced.
 The Church of Rome, therefore,
 is yet the Church of Christ, but
 what manner of Church? Surely
 so corrupted and depraved, and
 with so great tyrannie oppressed,
 that you can neither with a good

conscience, partake with them, in
their holy things, nor safely dwell
amongst them. Thus he againe;
wherein you see hee speakes as
home for me, as I could devise to
speake for my selfe, and as appo-
sitely professeth to oppose the
contrarie.

Looke, now, how this learned
Author may be reconciled to his
owne pen; and by the verie same
way, shall my pen bee reconciled
with others: Either he agrees not
with himselfe, or else, in his sense,
I agree with my gainayers: No-
thing is more plaine, then that hee
in that former speech, and all o-
ther classick Authors, that speake
in that Key, meane by a True
Church, a sound, pure, right believ-
ing Church; so as their every

bid. pra-
at. de nat.
dei.

rather *verax*? *Zanchie* explicates the terme, whiles he joines *veram* & *param* together; so as in this construction, it is no true Church that is an unsound one; as if truth of existence were all one with truth of doctrine: In this sense, whosoever shall say the Church of Rome is a true Church, I say he calls evill good, and is no better than a teacher of lies. But, if we measure the true being of a visible Church, by the direct maintenance of fundamentall principles, though by consequences indirectly overturned, and by the possession of the word of God, and his Sacraments, though not without foule adulteration; what judicious Christian can but, with mee, subscribe to learned *Zanchius*, that
the

the Church of Rome hath yet the true visibilitie of a Church of Christ: what should I need to press the latitude, and multiplicity of sense of the word, *Church*; there is no one term that I know, in all use of speech, so various; If, in a large sense, it be taken to comprehend the society of all that professe Christian Religion, through the whole world, howsoever impured, who can deale this title to the Roman? If, in a strict sense, it be taken (as it is by *Zanchinus* here, and all those Divines who refuse to give this stile to the Synagogue of Rome) for the companie of elect faithfull men gathered into one mysticall bodie under one head, *Christ*, washed by his blood, justified by his merits, sanctified by

by his Spirit, conscionable waiting upon the true ordinances of God, in his pure Word, and holie Sacraments, who can be so shamelesse, as to give this title to the Roman Church? Both these sentences, then, are equally true; *The Church of Rome is yet a true Church, in the first sense; The Church of Rome long since ceased to bee a true Church in the second.* As those friendly soldiers therefore, of old, said to their fellowes (*μὴ μάχεσθαι*?) why fight we? Stay, stay, deare brethren, for Gods sake, for his Churches sake, for your soules sake, stay these busie and unprofitable litigations; put up, on both sides, your angrie pens; Turne your Swords into Sifters to cut downe the many Corruptions of the Roman church; and

and your Speares into Mattocks,
 to beat downe the walls of this
 mysticall Babylon; There are ene-
 mies enow abroad, Let us bee
 friends at home; But if our sense
 be the same, you will aske, why
 our termes varie, and why wee
 have chosen to fall upon that ma-
 ner of expression, which gives ad-
 vantage to the Adversarie, offence
 to our owne? Christian Reader,
 let me beseech thee, in the bowels
 of Christ, to weigh well this mat-
 ter, and then tell me why such of-
 fence, such advantage should bee
 rather given by my words, than
 by the same words, in the mouth
 of Luther, of Calvin, of Zanchie, La-
 ninus, Plessée, Hooker, Andrewes,
 Field, Crakenthorpe, Bedel, and that
 whole cloud of learned and pi-
 ous

ous Authors, who have, without exceptiō, used the same language? And why more by my words, now, than twentie yeares agoe, at which time I published the same truth, in a more full and liberall expression. VVise and charitable Christians may not be apt to take offence where none is given. As for anie advantage that is hereby given to the Adversaries, they may put it in their eye, and see never the worse. Loe, say they, we are of the true visible Church; this is enough for us; why are we forsaken, why are we persecuted, why are we solicited to a change? Alas, poore soules, doe they not know, that Hypocrites, lewd persons, reprobates, are no lesse members of the true visible Church?

what gaine they by this but a deeper damnation? To what purpose did the Iewes crie, *The Temple of the Lord*, whiles they despigh-
 ted the Lord of that Temple? Is the sea-weed ever the lesse vile, be-
 cause it is dragd up together with
 good fish? They are of the visible
 Church, such as it is; what is this
 but to say, they are neither Iewes,
 nor Turkes, nor Pagans; but mis-
 beleevers, damnable hereticall in
 opinion, shamefullie idolatrous
 in practice; Let them make their
 best of this just Elogie; and tri-
 umph in this style; may we never
 prosper if we envie them this glo-
 rie: Our care shall be, that, besides
 the Church sensible, (as *Zuinglius*
 distinguisheth) we may be of the
 Church spirituall; and not resting
 in

*Epist. l. 2.
 resp. ad Ca-
 tabaptist.*

in a fruitlesse visibilitie, wee may
finde our selves livelie limbes of
the mystical body of *Christ*; which
onlie condition shall give us a
true right to heaven; whiles fa-
shionable profession, in vain cries,
Lord, Lord, and is barred out of
those blessed gates, with an, *I know
you not.*

Neither may the Reader think,
that I affect to goe by-waies of
speech: no, I had not taken this
path, unlesse I had found it both
more beaten, and fairer: I am not
so unwise, to teach the Adversarie
what disadvantage I conceive to
be given to our most just cause, by
the other manner of explication.
Let it suffice to say, that this form
of defence more fully stops the ad-
versaries mouth in those two
maine

maine and envious scandale,
 which hee casts upon our holy
 Religion, Defection from the
 Church, and Innovation; than
 which, no suggestion hath wont
 to bee more prevalent with
 weake, and ungrounded hearts;
 what wee further win by this,
 not more charitable, than safe
Tenet, I had rather it should be
 silently conceived by the judi-
 cious, then blazoned by my
 free penne; shortly, in this state
 of the question, our gaine is as
 cleare, as the Adversaries losse;
 our ancient Truth triumphed
 over their upstart errors, our
 charitie over their mercilesse pre-
 sumptions; Feare not therefore,
 deare brethen, where there is

C

no

no roome for danger; Suspect
 not fraud where there is no-
 thing but plaine; honest, sim-
 plicitie of intentions; censure
 not where there is the same
 Truth, clad in a different, but
 more easie habite of words;
 But if any mans fervent zeale
 shall rather draw him to the li-
 king of that other, rougher, and
 harder way, so as in the meane
 time he keepe within the bounds
 of Christian charitie, I take him
 not; let every man abound in
 his owne sense; Onely let our
 hearts, and tongues, and hands,
 conspire together in peace with
 our selves, in warre with our
 common enemies.

Thus farre have I (Right Ho-
 nou-

nourable) in a desire of peace,
 poured out my selfe into a plaine
 explication, and easie accordance:
 Those whom I strive to satisfie,
 are onely mis-takers; whose
 censures, if some man would
 have either laught out, or despi-
 sed; yet I have condescended to
 take off by a serious deprecati-
 on, and just defence.

It is an unreasonable motion
 to request mindes prepossessed
 with prejudice to heare reason;
 Whole Volumes are nothing to
 such as have contented them-
 selves onely to take up opini-
 ons upon trust, and will hold
 them, because they know where
 they had them: In vaine should
 I spend my selfe in beating up-

on such anviles; but for those ingenuous Christians, which will hold an eare open for justice, and truth, I have said enough, if ought at all needed.

Alas, my Lord, I see and grieve to see it; It is my Rochet that hath offended, and not I; In another habit, I, long since, published this, and more, without dislike; It is this colour of innocence that hath bleared some over-tender eyes; Wherein I know not whether I should more pittie their error, or applaud my owne sufferings; although I may not say with the Psalmist, *What hath the righteous done?* Let mee (I beseech your Lordship) upon this occasion, have

have leave to give a little vent to
my just griefe in this point.

The other day I fell upon a
Latine Pamphlet, homely for
style, tedious for length, zealous
ly uncharitable for stuffe, where-
in the Author (onely wile in
this, that hee would bee un-
knowne) in a grave fiercenesse
flies in the face of our English
Prelacie; not so much inveigh-
ing against their persons, (which
hee could bee content to reve-
rence) as their verie places. I
blest my selfe to see the case so
altered; Heretofore, the Person
had wont to beare off manie
blowes from the function, now
the verie function wounds the
person: In what case are wee,
C 3 when

when that which should com-
 mand respect, brands us? What
 blacke Art hath raised up this
 spirit of *Arius* from his pit? Who
 is mee, that zeale should breed
 such monsters of conceit: It is
 the honour, the pompe, the
 wealth, the pleasure (hee saith)
 of the Episcopall Chaire that is
 guiltie of the depravation of our
 Calling; and if himselfe were
 so overlayd with greatnesse, he
 should suspect his owne fidel-
 tie. Alas, poore man, at what
 distance doth hee see us? Fog-
 gie Ayre useth to represent eve-
 rie object farre bigger than
 is. Our SAVIOUR in his tem-
 peration upon the Mount, ha-
 onely the glorie of those King-
 dome

domes showed to him, by that
subtile Spirit, not the cares, and
vexations; Right so are our dig-
nities exhibited to these envious
beholders; Little doe these men
see the toyles, and anxieties that
attend this supposedly-pleasing
eminence.

All the revenge that I would
wish to this uncharitable Cen-
surer, should bee this, that hee
might bee but for a while ad-
judged to this so glorious seate
of mine; that so his experience
might taste the bewitching plea-
sures of this envied greatnesse;
hee should well finde more dan-
ger of being over-spent with
worke, than of languishing with
ease and delicacie.

For mee I need not appeale
 to Heaven: Eyes enow can wit-
 nesse how few fice houres I
 have enjoyed, since I put on these
 Robes of sacred honour. In so
 much as I could finde in my
 heart, with holy Gregorie, to
 complaine of my change; were
 it not, that I see these publique
 troubles are so many acceptable
 services to my G O D, whose
 glorie is the end of my being:
 Certainly, my Lord, if none but
 earthly respects should sway me,
 I should heartily wish to change
 this Pallace (which the Provi-
 dence of G O D, and the Boun-
 tie of my gracious Soveraigne
 hath put mee into) for my qui-
 et Cell at *Waltbam*, where I had

so sweet leasure to enjoy God,
 your Lordship, and my selfe:
 But I have followed the calling
 of my G O D, to whose service
 I am willingly sacrificed; and
 must now, in an holy obedi-
 ence to his Divine Majestie,
 with what cheerefulnesse I may,
 ride out all the stormes of en-
 vie, which unavoidably will a-
 light upon the least appearance
 of a conceived greatnesse; in the
 meane time, what ever I may
 seeme to others, I was never less
 in my owne apprehensions; and,
 were it not for this attendance
 of envie, could not yeeld my
 selfe any whit greater than I was;
 what ever I am, that good God
 of mine, make mee faithfull to
 him;

him; and compose the unquiet
spirits of men, to a conscionable
care of the publique peace; with
which prayer, together with the
appreciation of all happinesse to
your Lordship, and all yours, I
take leave and am

Your Lordships truly de-

voted in all hearty

observance and

affection

of envie, could not yeeld my

selfe any whit greater than I was;

God bless that good
of mine, make mee faithfull to
him;

